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explore the foundation on which they rest, how far they are our own, or the opinions of others. This is important advice; and circumstances have been favourable to me in following it; as I have gone over again, with the eyes of circumspection and matured experience, the ground which I trod in my youth; and an attachment to names has not prevented me from pursuing other paths than those prescribed by custom or authority.*

I was amused, by a conversation of some tutors of colleges, and masters of arts, not long ago, at Cambridge; in which my opinions were discussed, and my conclusions denied. I smiled to think, that had I remained in the same place, I might probably have joined in the same censure. The Ptolemaick was equally tenacious with the Newtonian school, of its own opinions; and Copernicus escaped its persecution, by ceasing to live, just as his book was published. We are now grown wiser. We may smile at each others opinions on systems of worlds, and Newton's nothings: but all must go through the ordeal of investigation; and there is no Inquisition to uphold the system of gravity. I was once not aware, that my studies would lead me to the conclusions which this volume contains. As they presented themselves to my mind, the reader has them; it is for him to use them as he pleases, provided he examines them with the same desire to come at truth, as the author entertained when he formed them. Should I live to accomplish my intended work, I may have to communicate many other things, occurring in the course of my observations, that do not coincide entirely with received opinions. Every day's experience

teaches us, that the wisest have every day something to learn; and they are to be pitied, whether individuals or nations, who are content to tread, over and over again, the same beaten ground; not considering, that to our lower philosophy may be applied what is so beautifully said on a more important subject, by our Holy teacher: "Aim at perfection, for your Father in Heaven is perfect."

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

THERE is, perhaps, no event in our lives of more importance, than the choice of that trade or profession by which we are to gain a livelihood; nor is there any duty a parent has to perform more arduous, than that of placing his son in a situation congenial to his taste and disposition.

If a boy is put to a business for which he has neither taste nor genius, it cannot be expected that he will attain proficiency. He has, as it were, to swim against the tide. Perseverance, seconded by a train of favourable circumstances, may procure him wealth, but it is next to impossible that he can rise to eminence. On the other hand, if a lad of genius is put to a servile or mean occupation, his spirit will be broken, and he will feel degraded in his own estimation. His mind, not being in conformity with his situation, will be often diverted from that steady attention which is essential to success.

A learned writer has justly remarked, that "many a man who makes an incorrect and unfortunate trader, would have been an ornament to a liberal profession; and the cause of his failure may be that very turn of mind which would have raised

* Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,

ed him to eminence and affluence in a higher sphere."

It is equally true, that many have been educated for a liberal profession, whom nature never intended for a higher rank than that of a ploughman: thus, in every one whose talents are misapplied, society loses a useful member. But this is not the worst effect of such misapplication; by this means much individual happiness is destroyed, for it is impossible any person can enjoy satisfaction in a situation, the duties of which he is either unwilling or unable to perform, and he is thus deprived of that greatest of all blessings, a contented mind.

Parents should narrowly observe their children from their earliest years, and endeavour to ascertain the bent of their genius, which generally develops itself in the course of their education, before the time arrives which makes it necessary for them to embark on the voyage of life. Such as are intended for mechanical trades, should be afforded frequent opportunities of observing the manual operations of as great a variety as possible, and should, if there are not strong reasons to the contrary, have liberty to adopt that to which their own inclination gives a preference. If this course be impartially taken, it will be seldom found, that a boy will choose that for which he is either bodily or mentally unfit.

Meanwell was the son of a mechanic, who was justly characterized by his neighbours, as an honest, industrious man; but the nature of his employment was such, as to afford designing people advantages, which his simple unsuspecting disposition was ill calculated to oppose; the consequence was, that he met with difficulties which a worse man would have escaped, and he became so much disgusted with his own, that

he determined to have his son instructed in a different trade.

Young Meanwell, at an early age, displayed a lively ingenious mind. At such intervals as he got to school, he was usually found at the head of his class, and his progress was rapid in spelling, reading, and arithmetic. He imbibed a strong taste for reading, and general information, and a gentleman in the neighbourhood lent him some select books, by which means his mind became more expanded at an early age, than is usual with boys in a similar situation. He had, at an early period, taken a fancy to a particular trade, and even his childish amusements indicated his choice; but, unfortunately for him, it was not the choice of his father, who had long made up his mind to put him to another. The reasonings and pleadings of the youth were vain; they were treated as the whims of a child, who was incapable of judging for himself, and he was left no choice but to go apprentice to that trade for which his father had destined him, or go to service, with the prospect of spending his life as a day-labourer. He had too much penetration not to perceive the hardships and poverty to which that class of men are necessarily subjected, and he had read, that "he who hath a calling, hath an estate." Accordingly, his father's wishes were complied with, and, by his natural ingenuity, he became a proficient, notwithstanding his dislike to the business. In his solitary moments, comparisons between the trade he had learned, and that which was his own choice, forced themselves on his mind. He felt all the difficulties of the one, and the advantages of the other were viewed with a partial eye. His mind became soured. Perseverance, that quality so essential to success, gave way to negli-

gence, he envied those he saw in a situation which he was accustomed to contemplate with pleasure. He reflected blame on a father, who, in other circumstances, would have been regarded with the most tender affection; and, at last, he sought relief from his troubles in the bowl of intoxication. Thus were bad habits formed, and evil passions engendered, in a mind naturally amiable and ingenuous. In short, he lived a prey to a gloomy, fluctuating, and discontented mind, and ended his days in obscurity and indigence.

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To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

"Oh, la! cries a Miss, how enchantingly clever,
"As I hope to be saved, you are greater than ever."

If your readers were to judge of the characters of the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine by the sentiments so frequently reiterated in such parts of the work as are well known to be written by themselves, they might reasonably suppose, that you were a company of long-visaged philosophers, who, from the melancholy reflections arising from the frequent habit of viewing the many follies and vices of mankind, had contracted a certain expression of countenance, which a fanciful being, who prided himself upon his skill in physiognomy, might imagine, indicated, that you thought "Life was war, eternal war with woe," as you certainly give the public most gloomy pictures of the commercial and political state of the nation.

If such has been the impression which your writings have made on the minds of your readers, how much reason have they to be surprised, that you have complied with the vitiated taste of some of your

novel-reading writers and readers, who can relish nothing but tales, and inserted a story, which you entitled, "Generosity of character exemplified in the story of Benevolus and Florella;" but which, I think, would have had a more appropriate appellation, if you had entitled it, "An attempt to prove how far ladies may proceed in flirting without censure." On first reading this story, I had thought the ladies should meet to return you thanks for pointing out so minutely how far they were authorized to proceed in flirting, but on considering the matter more fully, I feared if such a measure had been proposed, some prudent ladies would have been inclined to pass a vote of censure on the writer of the story, and on you for giving it publicity.

I do not indiscriminately censure the whole of the story of Benevolus and Florella; it contains some good observations; but surely to enforce these observations, it was not necessary to relate a story of a flirting widow.

The story was misplaced, when it obtained admission into your pages; you should continue to maintain the character which your Magazine has generally so well supported, of an independent and instructive publication, and leave such tales to novel writers, and to the insipid and trifling Walter Scott. I mention his name in particular, because, in his poem of Rokeby, he gives a sanction to his copyists to permit their heroines to flirt, as his heroine Matilda is an adept in this polite accomplishment, and adopts a line of conduct similar to that pursued by your Florella. Although determined not to marry the "gentle and meek Wilfrid," she is said to have

....."read the tales his taste approv'd,
And sung the lays he fram'd or lov'd;
Yet loth to nurse the fatal flame
Of hopeless love in friendship's name,
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